

What Housing Providers Should Know About **FAIR HOUSING** **IN PA**

As a housing provider, you play a key role in ensuring all Pennsylvanians have equal opportunity in housing. It is unlawful to treat individuals and households differently in their housing because of their protected class. That is called housing discrimination.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) provides fair housing protections to ensure that Pennsylvanians do not experience housing discrimination by establishing protected classes:

- race
- color
- age (40+)
- religious creed
- ancestry
- sex
- national origin
- disability
- familial status
- retaliation

Trainings & Resources

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) offers housing providers free trainings to help them understand their fair housing rights and responsibilities.

To learn more, go to PHRC's website: www.pa.gov/PHRC, or email PHRC at phrc@pa.gov.

Examples of Housing Discrimination

- Refusing to lease, sell, or finance housing because of someone's protected class.
- Stating a preference for, or a bias against, members of a protected class in statements or advertisements
- Setting unfair terms and conditions in a lease agreement or policy on the basis of a renter's protected class.
- Unequally providing facilities, services, and privileges on the basis of protected class, such as restricting the use of common spaces, or delaying needed maintenance services.
- Steering prospective tenants to certain areas or types of housing on the basis of their protected class.
- Refusing a reasonable modification to the premises for individuals with disabilities, such as not allowing a ramp or grab bars to be installed.
- Refusing a reasonable accommodation to policies and rules for individuals with disabilities, such as not allowing reserved parking or an assistance animal.
- Asking questions about a prospective tenant's protected class during the leasing process.
- Retaliating against a tenant for filing a fair housing complaint, or participating in a fair housing investigation.



Handling Reasonable Accommodation & Modification Requests

Fair housing protections help individuals with disabilities to live in housing of their choice. These tenants have the right to request a reasonable accommodation or modification when needed to use and enjoy their housing.

- Reasonable accommodation: change in policy, practice, or service. Examples: requesting an assistance animal, reserved parking, or to pay their rent on a different date because of disability-related income.
- Reasonable modification: change in the structure of their housing. Examples: adding a ramp or grab bars; installing a flashing alarm or lowering countertops.

When a housing provider gets this request, they should:

- Establish that the tenant has a disability, as well as disability-related need for what is requested.
- If the tenant's disability is observable, a housing provider should not ask for documentation regarding their disability. If the disability is not observable, the housing provider may ask for a letter documenting the disability from a licensed provider that is knowledgeable about the tenant's condition.
- If those criteria are met, and the request is reasonable, the request should be granted.
- If that request cannot be reasonably granted, the housing provider should engage in conversation with the tenant about ways to meet their disability-related housing needs.
- It is recommended that a housing provider document any reasonable accommodation or modification requests and responses for their records.

Easy Ways for Housing Providers to Avoid Making Fair Housing Mistakes

- Get regular fair housing training so they can stay up to date with the latest fair housing guidance.
- Establish practices for screening tenants, enforcing lease terms, handling reasonable accommodation requests, and other situations that may have a fair housing impact. Make sure their team are aware of these policies and comply with them.
- When advertising units, describe the qualities of the property itself, not the characteristics of potential residents they think should live there.
- Do not ask for any information about tenants' protected classes in the leasing process.
- Always engage in discussion about how they can meet the disability-related housing needs of your tenants. Seek solutions that meet the needs that they disclose, even if the original request can't be granted.
- When questions arise, call PHRC's free Fair Housing Line, where trained staff are available to discuss fair housing practices: 855-866-5718.

What does the PHRC do?

The **Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC)** is the agency that enforces the PHRA. If individuals believe they have experienced discrimination because of their protected class, they may file a complaint with PHRC to have the situation investigated.

If it is found that a housing provider has committed housing discrimination, they may face financial penalties, required training and posting of notices, changes of policies, and more.

If you have questions, 717- 787-4410 (717-787-7279 TTY) or contact the regional office nearest you:

Harrisburg
555 Walnut Street, Suite 808
Harrisburg, PA 17101
717-787-9780 | 717-787-7279 (TTY)

Philadelphia
110 N. 8th Street, Suite 501
Philadelphia, Pa 19107
215-560-2496 | 215-560-3599 (TTY)

Pittsburgh
301 5th Avenue, Suite 390, Piatt Place
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-545-5395 | 412-565-5711 (TTY)



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